

Handbook Q &A

Why are these measures being proposed?

Cities prosper when downtowns are active and inviting. These measures are intended to provide a framework to help individuals interested in generating on-street activity achieve their goals quickly and easily.

This effort is an outgrowth of Raleigh's "Livable Streets" plan, a community-based downtown initiative which set five essential objectives to be achieved by 2007. This handbook relates to four:

1. Expand downtown management to take a one stop approach to management and advocacy.
2. Improve the pedestrian environment making downtown accessible to everyone. Balance the needs of pedestrians against those of the car. Create an attractive, well lit, safe environment that links office and residential uses to amenities such as restaurants, museums and other venues.
3. Complete a Fayetteville Street Renaissance to reinvigorate the street as the heart of Raleigh, our ceremonial corridor and the premiere address for office, events and cultural activity.
4. Undertake regulatory reform to improve the business climate by removing regulatory impediments, making it just as easy to do business downtown as any place in the region.

The proposed measures seek to achieve this for downtown's public spaces by creating a "one stop" permits shop, and significantly reducing the time required for review and approval of certain permits.

What are "public spaces"?

Spaces owned by the City of Raleigh-which is to say, all citizens. They include streets, sidewalks, public plazas, and parks. The City is obligated to maintain these spaces on behalf of the citizenry. As part of that responsibility, the City sets rules for private uses of public space, in balance with the public's need for access, and for the upkeep of the space.

What parts of the City would be affected by these standards?

In general terms, greater downtown Raleigh. More specifically-those areas within the Downtown Overlay District (an area defined under the City zoning code), plus three adjacent downtown business districts-Glenwood South, the North Person Street retail area (Oakwood-Mordecai), and the Peace Street retail area.

Added standards apply along Fayetteville Street and the immediately-adjacent blocks of intersecting cross-streets, in complement to the special design status of "North Carolina's Main Street." For lots at inside corners with Wilmington or Salisbury streets, the regulations extend around the corner to each lot's far property line.

What do these measures address?

Two interrelated matters: standards for use of downtown public spaces, and procedures for obtaining permits in those public spaces.

What uses do the standards cover?

In general, non-permanent private uses of public spaces, specifically:

- newsracks
- outdoor dining
- street performances
- pushcart vending
- certain minor encroachments, including outdoor merchandise, street furniture and accessories, awnings, lighting, signage and Façade Grant elements.

What are the objectives of these measures?

For use standards:

- To provide fair and equitable regulation.
- To assure a safe and comfortable street-level environment.
- To promote economic activity in Downtown.

- To establish maintenance standards and responsibilities when public space is used for private purposes.
- To enhance the appearance of streets, sidewalks and other public spaces.

For permit procedures:

- To provide a one-stop shop for obtaining permits for use of public rights-of-way spaces.
- To encourage diverse street-level activity.
- To make it convenient to do business in public spaces.
- To make it easier to obtain information on procedures and standards regarding use of public spaces.

Who will administer these measures?

The City of Raleigh Inspections Department, which is located at 4th floor of One Exchange Plaza building (just off Fayetteville Street). Inspections will be the home of the new Downtown Permits Office. Assisting in communicating with permit holders will be the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, and the City of Raleigh Police Department.

How were these measures developed?

Many of the topics are already addressed in the existing City Code. Analysis of standards in other cities and present needs in Raleigh led the Department of City Planning to draft amended standards. Successive drafts have been reviewed by City staff members currently involved in administering related permits, as well as by private organizations involved in downtown development.

Additionally, this fall, a series of public feedback sessions were held with key stakeholders, including street vendors, restaurant owners, and newsrack owners. At each point, the draft provisions have been refined to address issues identified. The aim is to produce a document that is fair, easily understood, and easily administered.

When will the standards go into effect?

April 1, 2007. Current permit application processes for the affected uses will remain in effect until that date.